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Today in World Affairs

Behind the Delay on Cuba —A Big Mystery Is Seen

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President Kennedy is to be commended for doing his duty in the Cuban situation. His announcement of policy was phrased in unequivocal and positive terms. But the big mystery is why the same action wasn't taken sooner, and why for nearly two months now the country was led to believe the Monroe Doctrine was "outmoded" and that the United States couldn't very well act in Cuba without embarrassing itself in Berlin and Western Europe.

At last, however, the similarities have been clarified as between defensive steps taken by the United States and her Allies in Europe against potential aggression and defensive steps now being taken against the Soviet Union's conspicuous aggression in the Western Hemisphere.

Abandoning a policy that did not include a single public protest against what the Moscow government was doing, the United States now expresses itself emphatically and tells the world that the Soviets have been lying about their maneuvers inside Cuba. This is a startling change in the situation, and the full disclosure by the President will be welcomed throughout America.

But why didn't the U. S. act earlier? It certainly had the principal facts about the Soviet buildup of military weapons inside Cuba. This correspondent set them forth in a dispatch Aug. 24. Also, members of Congress in their speeches several weeks ago publicly called attention to the Soviet operations in Cuba. Thus, Sen. Thomas J. Dodd, Democrat of Connecticut, said to the Senate Sept. 10:

"I have reason to believe, on the basis of information from reliable sources, that the situation in Cuba is even more grave than has yet been indicated to the American public.

"The fantastic buildup of Soviet planes and tanks and missiles and advisory personnel that has gone on in Cuba over the past year cannot be dismissed as purely defensive.

Keating Also Spoke

"As the distinguished Senator from New York (Kenneth Keating, Republican, pointed out last Wednesday, weapons per se cannot be divided into clearly defined defensive and offensive categories. Most weapons can be used for either purpose. It all depends on who wields the weapons and on the intent of the wielder."

Sen. Keating in another speech to the Senate Aug. 31 had referred extensively to the Soviet buildup in Cuba. Several weeks ago, moreover, letters started pouring into the White House, the Department of Defense and the Department of State telling of the Soviet military operation in Cuba. This correspondent received early on Monday of this week a letter dated Oct. 18 from an aeronautical engineer of wide knowledge and wartime experience who had been pleading with the government here for weeks to analyze realistically the information available on the missile buildup in Cuba. In his letter the engineer said:

"The means for delivery of nuclear weapons are already now in Cuba in the form of more than 100 MIG fighters. Two hundred more fighters are under delivery or planned for delivery. The only difference between a fighter aircraft and a fighter bomber is a bomb rack which, in the case of the two MIG models, can be mounted in a matter of minutes. Both aircrafts can carry nuclear bombs of a size two to three times as big as the Polaris warhead over distances which, scaled from Cuba, would put New York, Buffalo, Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago, Kansas City, Oklahoma City, Fort Worth, Dallas, San Antonio, and therefore most of the heavily populated portion of the U. S. within their reach. To the south the Panama Canal in its entire length is also in easy reach of these fighter bombers."

The engineer also pointed out that a defense against this type of attack is difficult because low-flying aircraft cannot be tracked by long-range radar. He also said the Golem intermediate range ballistic missiles are still in-

pendent on land-based launching sites. He added:

"Every deeper bay of the Cuban island is a launching site needing no preparation. Commercial ships can hoist them overboard and launch them. . . . the range of the advanced Golem II covers most of the Eastern United and the Panama Canal."

Why wasn't information of this kind—available at least a month to six weeks ago—acted on sooner? Why, if the facts were clear that Cuba has had potentially dangerous weapons on hand, wasn't Cuba ordered many weeks ago to destroy all such weapons or face a military move that will eliminate the weapons because they are dangerous to the security of the United States?

The President in his Monday night speech said "the first preliminary hard information" came late Tuesday morning, Oct. 16. A Pentagon spokesman told the press Monday of this week that not until Monday, Oct. 15, and early Tuesday, Oct. 16, were pictures available, and he added: "that was the first time that we had any reason to believe that there were offensive weapons in Cuba."

Maybe there's an explanation for a lack of action in the face of what was being printed all over the world—especially in European newspapers—about the nature of the weapons the Soviets had sent to Cuba. But no satisfactory reasons have been given as yet for the delay in formulating American policy. Certainly much valuable time has been lost in failing to heed the warnings that started as early as July and came out in the open in August and early September. It's a big mystery why nothing was done sooner to check-mate the Soviet Union's aggressive move of a military nature in this hemisphere.

Americans can only hope that the delay has not been irreparable and that within the next several days the Soviet missile pads in Cuba will be wiped out by force if necessary. That's the plan intention of American policy now as outlined by the President in his television speech.

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